NBC

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick MD 21701

June 16, 1980

TODAY Show
TOMORROW Show
NBC-TV
New York, NY

Gentlemen:

Without intending it you were very unfair to David Phillips and the CIA in your two-segment promo of Tony Summers' rip-off of a book, "Conspiracy" - and I am anything but an apologist for the CIA or Phillips.

In terms of age, publication, duration and extent of work, I am senior among those called "critics" of the official investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy. I sue the CIA, expose it and criticize it, but on the basis of fact, not conjecture.

Legitimate criticism is beneficial. It cleanses, heals and strengthens if the patient is willing. Summers' unoriginal but touted as uniquely his own work is unfair and as conjecture is without support.

While having Phillips on the same show was a gestuse at fairness, the situation, which required him to prove a negative when justifiably angry, was not fair.

As a former intelligence officer whom Phillips would not accept into his sycophantic group, I suggest that your research people could have learned easily whether or not any case officer would bring together two of his clandestine contacts. He would not - never. As a Kennedy assassination subject expert, I suggest that your research people could easily establish whether there is reason to believe Oswald could have been in Dallas when Veciana placed him there. The alleged Dallas meeting was when Oswald is known to have been in New Orleans. (Sure, planes fly, if Oswald is not known to have used them. But detailed official and unofficial investigations do not disclose any reason to believe he was missing from New Orleans at the time in question.)

Such grossly unfair criticism tends to invalidate the justified criticism that is essential if agencies like the CIA are to reform, be effective and conduct themselves in accord with basic American belief.

What Summers claimed on the Tomorrow Show of June 10 that he alone did is a skilled mixture of blatant lying and unscrupulous literary thievery.

That Oswald used the return address of 544 Camp Street is stolen from my 1967 book, Oswald In New Orleans. Summers had it and, after printing, wrote to apologize for not crediting me with other material he lifted from it. That Delphine Roberts, the late Guy Banister's secretary, was never interviewed is false. She was interviewed for me and for Garrison. I also interviewed a number of others who worked for Banister and who hung out in his office. None of these people is of minimal credibility. And rather than the alleged Banister-Oswald connecting being unknown, it was so well-known it was to have been a keystone of the Clay Shaw defense before that form of defense became unneceasary. Shaw's lawyers were going to claim that Clay Shaw was mistaken for Guy Banister.

Most blatant of all Summers' thievery, boasted of as original "investigative reporting" on your air, is the Carolyn Arnold story. I obtained and in 1967 published in facsimile the very records he claims to have dug up himself. He got them from me. I attach photocopies of the records as I published them in May 1967 and his letter asking for copies of the books. Even the National Enquirer interviewed the former Mrs. Arnold before Summers did.

There is an operating procedure common to all the literary whores who seek to commercialize the great tragedy and to promote themselves in doing it. I do not believe that Summers, whose book I have not seen, departs from it because he cannot. He will use all he wants of the published work of others, rephrasing and rearranging it, and while not crediting most of it will go out of his way to appear to provide generous credit - for the least significant. (The outstanding bibliographer in the field is Dr. David Wrone, History Department, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. If you want to be fair, ask him.)

It is not necessary to assume Summers' familiarity with what he ripped off. He wrote me more than a year ago, from the home of Mrs. Mary Ferrell, who has what I believe is the largest siggle collection of published information on the subject. He said, "I have, of course, been reading your books for a long time, but always other people's copies. I would now like them all," and he asked that I send them to him at the next place he was going. I did.

His opening reference to Scott Malone reminds me of a Tony Summers story.

What he refers to as a BBC show was not that. Putting it that way permits Summers to freeze out the others and hog credit. It was a joint production with David Osterlund, based on Osterlund's idea. The full-page ad for it in Variety of December 14, 1977, makes no reference to BBC at all, in fact. When Malone brought Summers' co-producer and others of the staff here on December 16, 1977, they described Summers as far-out, a wild conspiracy theorizer (long before his book), and asked if they could bring him here so that I could do for him what I had done for them, debunk all the commercially attractive conspiracy theories they came up with.

Summers then and since has stayed away - from everything but my ripped-off work.

I have no book to promote, although I have kept six of my seven in print. I do not ask to be on either show. I am 67 years old, in imperfect health, and want only to be able to complete the rather large work I have undertaken. But the more time I spend working in this field, the more I become convinced that the Summerses of the world will continue to distort and misrepresent and in this prevent the one good that now can come from the great tragedy and the subsequent failure of our basic institutions - that their failures might come to be understood and that from this understanding and recognition repetition might be impossible when we are again faced with great tragedies.

If Summers had asked my permission to use what he ripped off, I'd have given it, as I do with all others and as I did with him when he asked it for a few items. My files which hold perhaps a quarter of a million of once-withheld official records, are a public archive now and after my death will be available in a university archive. But the Summerses of the world are rarely content with mere writing. They have to present themselves as heroes, pretendedly doing what others were not able to do or didn't try.

You can draw your own conclusions about why Summers did not come here to examine and use the large archive his TV associates told him was available to him.

There is also something quite demeaning to this country and its writers in what Summers pulled in his book and on your air. He would have the people, through you a very large number of people, believe that we Americans failed and that American writers in particular failed - that only he, British Dick Daring, could and did do what we did not do. The card catalogue of your New York library will reveal the truth - that whatever one thinks of what they have written, a large number of American writers have devoted great time and effort to airing their views in a large number of books.

I think you should make some effort to undo the harm Summers has done and provide truth to offset his well-promoted falsehoods and wild and unsupported conjectures and to expose his unprincipled thievery.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg